Stranger In The Snow

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Stranger In The Snow

by TigerPrawn

Summary

From the prompt: Tristan and Galahad. Modern AU. Tristan is a biker dude and happens to wander Galahad's bar as a snowstorm is about to hit. They get trapped there, with only each other to keep themselves warm.

Prompted by Aurora St. Claire as one of my fic giveaways

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

Stranger in the Snow
AO3: TigerPrawn

The bar's main doors banged open and Gal looked up, pissed. He was sure he'd secured the damn thing and with the storm coming in, he'd apparently better be more than sure about it. This bar was his livelihood and his home, it was bad enough he was already going to be closed for this incoming fucking snowstorm. He hadn't nailed the boards across the door yet, but even so it was a worry that the wind was able to force it.

A flurry of light snow entered through the open front doors and whirled around the floor before moving out of range of the draft and settling. A light dusting that melted within seconds. Gal grumbled and made his way to the door.

He hadn't stacked the chairs on the tables as he would at the end of a night usually, if the storm did break through the battened down windows, or even the damn door, then it would just cause more damage and chaos. So he'd left them neatly tucked under the heavy wooden tables, removed all the liquor from behind the bar into boxes down to the cellar, and shut off all the power just in case. The last thing he needed was a power line coming down and causing some sort of surge that lit up all the alcohol.

Gal moved sluggishly, already exhausted from both the physical effort of shutting up the entire bar and preparing it as far as possible, and the mental stress of that and the loss of earnings this would cause. Loss of earnings and storm damage? He was only one person, there was only so much he could do to fix the bar back up again without hiring a builder or something, should the worst happen.

He had a sudden vision of the roof being torn off and shuddered.

Gal took hold of the heavy door and started to push it closed when another blast of wind knocked him back. Fuck it was cold.

The snow wasn't even coming down that heavy, but the wind betrayed what was to come.

He pushed the door again, almost had it closed when he was sure he saw something. Between the snow and the darkness of an hour passed dusk, it was hard to make out what was going on in the small car park.

The bar was off the freeway, there was nothing for miles, not since the old motel closed down a mile up the road. The only reason he was still in business was because his customers generally rode over and eliminated the need for pedestrian walk ins. He'd never seen himself running a biker bar when he was a kid, but it here he was.

And now if this storm was as bad as they were predicting? He might lose it all.

"Hello?" Gal called into the darkness, sure for a split second he saw something. The heavily obscured streetlamp bouncing light off of leather.

For a moment he thought he must have been seeing things and was about to push the door again when he definitely saw something then. The shine of light off of bike as someone moved from it. A dark blur hiding another dark blur, until the mobile one came closer.

The figure, for it clearly was now a figure, removed it's helmet and began to pull down the high scarf around their face. *His* face.

Galahad's breath stopped for a moment. The man was fucking beautiful. Wearing thick layers of worn leathers, a beard somewhere between shaggy and trimmed and long hair that was in part tied back in braids. To be honest, this guy was exactly the reason he bought the biker magazines - it was rarely for the editorials. Gal had to take a moment to will his cock not to wake up from it's years long slumber, before he called out again.

"What the hell man, didn't you hear the broadcasts? Stay in doors, this storm is about to hit. Bad." Gal couldn't help the somewhat angry tone in his voice. It was nothing personal, just the way he communicated - without any intention in doing so. Abigail, who worked the bar most nights and seemed to latch onto him as a sibling stand-in to bitch at, said he was an asshole. But also a fucking delight, and that was why people didn't mind. His usual response was to grunt at her and glare, so maybe she had a point?

The man was taking a seriously long walk to the fucking bar, like he was out there taking a stroll with no care in the world. When he stepped up onto the low deck , Galahad was clenching his jaw. Already rubbed up the wrong way and the man hadn't even opened his mouth yet.

"I said-" Gal started again, this time a low growl, but he was cut off.

"Is this your bar?"

The man's accent had a quality to it that made Gal feel like he'd just been warmly caressed by it.

Fuck, he really needed to have gotten laid some time in the last year for this not to have his cock stirring. He was pathetic.

"Yes," He snapped, dumbstruck when the man walked casually passed him and into the bar as he continued to remove layers - stowing his gloves in his helmet. Gal turned and watched him as he placed his items down on one of the tables and then looked up.

There was a slight drift of snow caught in the man's hair and beard that almost immediately melted into little droplets of water. Gal's eyes couldn't help but draw into the ones along his top lip - wondering if the ice water drops would be chilly against his tongue.

Fuck, damn it!

“The storm is close, I need to stay here until it passes,” The man informed him, his eyes tracking the movement of Gal’s own. A flicker of amusement lit the man’s face, as though he had seen something in Galahad’s expression, and was gone again.

“The fuck? Look buddy, it’s not my fault if you misjudged the storm-”

“Tristan,” The man cut him off again. “My name is Tristan, I’m not your buddy. And I did not misjudge the storm, I simply had faith that I would find shelter before it hit, and that faith apparently has not been misplaced.” He indicated the room he now stood in.

They stood in silence for a moment, the low howl of the wind becoming louder and another flurry boldly sweeping into the bar.

“You’re a fucking pill,” Gal commented dryly, otherwise at a loss for words. He received a smile in return as the man shrugged out of his thick leather jacket and laid it on the table next to his helmet and gloves.

“Not very welcoming for a publican,” That fucking drawl made Gal hate the guy for what it did to his loins.

“A publican of an establishment about to be literally nailed shut against this crazy-ass storm.” Gal didn’t even attempt to hide his exasperated annoyance.

The man smirked and cocked his head before nodding it towards the still open door, “Guess I better help you get that door locked up then.”

Gal grit his teeth, a ball of anger wanting to scream it’s way up his throat, and then he relaxed. Letting it go, what the fuck else could he do?

“Come and fucking help me close this door then,” He responded gruffly before turning his back and expecting the other man to follow.

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After further introductions, the stranger hadn’t only helped him close the door, he proceeded to help Gal stow everything that was left to move, double checked the windows and doors with a second set of eyes and then helped Gal carry the couple of boxes of supplies down to the beer cellar.

He’d have to let the man stay down there with him really, there was no telling how unsafe the rest of the building might become. Even so, Gal was irked.

It wasn’t that he didn’t appreciate getting everything done quicker, especially as the blizzard was now closing fast, but he really didn’t need the company. In fact, despite the profit margin issues, he’d sort of been looking forward to closing the bar and having some time alone. It was a rare thing.

Gal knew he could afford to hire more help, a bar manager even, but he just didn’t want to. He wasn’t a control freak so much as someone who needed something to occupy them at all times. That said, he logically knew he should give himself more breaks than he did and the storm forcing one on him had seemed perfect.

He'd already made up a bed in the cellar and brought down supplies, not to mention some boxes of his more valuable and sentimental items. If worse came to worst and the bar was damaged, he didn't want to think of what could become of the second floor which housed his small apartment. He was already under no illusion that the roof was likely to get ripped off no matter what he did - hence setting up camp in the cellar for the duration.

He had food, drink, books. A couple of dirty magazines. He was only human after all.

It might last one night or three, maybe up to a week depending on whether or not the winds changed direction, which seemed to be hard for the meteorologists to say. Gal was prepared.

At least for himself.

He was not prepared to now have a complete stranger looking to him for shelter. This wasn't Bethlehem and this guy certainly wasn't Jesus… Or Joseph… or whatever the fuck.

Galahad kicked the metal frame of the camp bed in his frustration.

He couldn't very well leave the man out of the cellar, but he didn't have another bed. He huffed out an angry breath and turned back to Tristan who seemed to be ignoring the shittiness of Gal's hospitality.

"Okay, we'll have to rough it down here, there's only one bed, so come with me and we'll get some bedding," Gal didn't wait, nor look at the man he vaguely directed his words to, as he started towards the staff door and then up the stairs to his apartment.

The guy was stealthy as fuck, like some sort of hunter or tracker, as he arrived in Gal's bedroom a moment after him, in total silence.

Gal knew that should give him the creeps, but despite his sudden appearance, stoicism, lack of verbalisation and now this… the guy just didn't give off a scary vibe. At least not to Galahad. He could definitely imagine this man in his leathers, eating an apple with a knife and remaining eerily quiet as a bar fight erupted, until everyone was terrified that he was just going to throw the knife at their skulls. And, despite pretty much being able to imagine that in vivid detail, Gal still wasn't fearful. Maybe because weirdly, the guy was also incredibly chilled and gave that vibe off in waves.

And, okay, he was also marginally confident in being able to take care of himself. Because, if he was wrong, and this guy started on him for some reason, he'd find himself on his ass back out in the snow and likely missing an ear, or anything else Galahad could get his teeth into and rip off.

That thought had him suddenly blushing like a damn idiot, so Gal went straight to the heavy old wardrobe and started pulling out blankets and pillows. Enough to make a nice warm nest on the floor that would surely do for a night or two.

"Here," He turned and dumped a load of the stuff onto the man, "You've got the floor, uh Tristan."

The quirked brow from his *guest* had made Gal use his name. It had been easier keeping it impersonal and not even thinking about whether or not the man had a name. They'd barely spoken a word to each other since Tristan's arrival. And most of Gal's had been grunts.

"You're not very friendly," Tristan noted, looking a little amused.

“To strangers who show up at my bar whilst I’m trying to lock it down against a well publicised blizzard? Can’t say I’ve been in this situation before to compare, but I guess I’m not very friendly when it comes to being put upon like that.” He had to work to keep the growl from his tone as he turned to the wardrobe for the thick quilt that smelled musty with disuse.

When he turned back Tristan had an entire brow raised and a grin on his face.

“I don’t think I’m wrong in believing that you just aren’t very friendly in general.”

Galahad huffed but otherwise ignored the comment as he pushed passed with an armful of bedding. The wind howling outside was louder on this floor and he could already hear bits of the roof straining and flapping.

“Time to lock ourselves in the cellar and try not to kill each other,” Galahad mumbled. The following chuckle from Tristan both annoyed him and sent a tingly jolt through his gut.

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It seemed rude not to offer the man food, but Gal did so begrudgingly.

He’d made a whole bunch of meals he could reheat on the camping stove he’d brought down to the makeshift living area. There were several of them piled into one of the wine fridges and he was already calculating how long it would take to get through them with two people instead of one. It might be fine, the storm might pass within 24 hours - the best estimate. But anything beyond two days and they might have to resort to cannibalism.

Gal closed his eyes and grit his teeth, trying to suppress the sudden mental image of biting down on his impromptu guest’s firm ass cheek. *Fuck*, he clearly needed to get laid more than he’d realised. When the storm passed he would take himself into the city and find a hookup. He fucking hated meeting guys like that, but he wasn’t looking to get tied down or even invest the time in a friend with benefits so there weren’t really any other options.

His only friends really were the Sarmatians - the local biker gang he’d sort of been adopted into. But he was a bit younger than most of them and had little in common beyond the bar so he was sure they just thought of him as something of a mascot. Which might have been perfect for casual sex had any of them been remotely gay. He had never even told any of them out right, but he’d said enough in passing at the bar for people to clue in, and so far he’d had no issues so how much they might care about that was still anyone’s guess.

“You camp?” Tristan’s question caught Gal off guard and he shot a look over his shoulder to where the man had made himself comfortable sitting on the camp bed whilst he heated his food. It took a beat for Galahad to realise he was asking about the camping gear and not referring to some flamboyant tendencies.

“Um, yeah. I used to, quite a bit. Not much chance these days with running the bar,” Gal answered, also begrudgingly. It wasn’t like he could spend the whole time ignoring the man who then went completely silent, his eyes still on him, boring into him with expectation.

Clearly a fellow non-conversationalist expecting him to now do his part in this.

Gal huffed a sigh. “How about you?”

Tristan looked down, at the bowl of stew he had finished and was cradling in his hands. Galahad couldn't help but be mesmerised for a moment by them - strong hands with long fingers that he could imagine on a pianist or a surgeon.

"I camp a lot. It's what I would be doing now without the storm. I travel a lot, just me and Isolde."

"Isolde?" Gal asked too quickly, a tug in his gut at the mention of a woman. Oh, he really didn't want to unpack that. The first guy he's been forced to spend time with in, he didn't know how long, and his dick was already wanting to marry the guy. His dick was going to get him beaten up if it got too interested and it turned out this guy was not okay with a gay guy sporting an obvious stiffy around him.

"My motorcycle," Tristan answered, pausing after whilst he studied Galahad with a slightly amused expression.

Fucker.

Fuck.

Was he that obvious? Gal held back a groan of embarrassment.

"We've been together for years, reliable and hard wearing. Gets me from A to B-"

"Can't be used as shelter in a storm," Gal interrupted, chuckling at his critical joke.

Tristan, thankfully (or not, whatever), didn't appear to be insulted, his lip quirking up into a half grin. "No, her only failing."

Galahad held back the several cheeky responses that jumped to mind, but considering he hadn't gotten laid in years it probably wasn't anything he had a right to joke about.

Tristan changed the conversation anyway, definitely thankfully..

"You're very prepared for this," He noted, looking at the small space they sat in, which Gal had pretty much converted into an indoor campsite.

He'd cleared out the empty barrels and rejigged enough stock to clear a corner of the cellar. He'd set up the camp bed, a small heater that had been going for most of the day now to warm the naturally cool space, some boxes of supplies created a barrier to the rest of the room. The camping stove was in the middle and he sat in a deck chair next to it. Everything practical was placed to hand, and whilst it spoke of the times he'd spent camping it owed as much to the times he'd had to sleep rough.

"I… I've been setting it up the last couple of days," Gal felt a little flustered by the observation, even though the man wouldn't have any idea of Gal's past, the words came out terse anyway, defensive. He moved back from the stove but set his stew aside, no longer feeling hungry.

Tristan quirked a brow but said nothing.

"I… I'll set up your bed," Gal mumbled.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

snowed in, sharing a bed, strangers to lovers, this chapter has it all and then some!

It was late by the time Gal had finished organising the pillows, blankets and quilt into a nest close to his own bed. His first impulse had been to try and create a separate area for his guest, but then realised that was more for his own comfort.

In the end, he did the least asshole thing he could think of and put it next to his bed, the area which was directed the most warmth from the heater they now had to share.

He'd brought a bucket down previously, when it was just going to be him. But as the storm was yet to progress from howling winds and heavy snow, they could still use the bathrooms in the bar - the closest to them was just up the stairs. Which was where Tristan had disappeared to with his bag and Gal had taken the chance to change into sweatpants and an old t-shirt, pulling a warm hoodie over the top that had been given to him by the local bikers from a rally they'd held.

It had the Sarmatians name and logo - their 'patch' - on the front. The same one the gang wore on the back of their leather jackets.

He really only wore it around the place after hours. Whilst Gal appreciated their kindness, he felt weird wearing their patch when he was not really one of them. Tristan's reaction, when he returned, was definitely one of the reasons Gal didn't wear it.

The man's eyes ran over him, taking him in as he rejoined their little campsite, and ending with a furrowed brow on the emblazoned hoodie. Gal's cheeks heated with… something.

Annoyance? Embarrassment? Maybe he was just feeling the burn from having been caught out for letting his own gaze drink in the man who now stood divested of the many heavy layers he'd been in. He was down to a thick, long sleeved t-shirt, with his rough worn jeans over what appeared to be an athletic and robust figure.

"You're a Sarmatian?" Tristan's question was a low, curious growl that vibrated through Gal.

He inwardly cursed how easily affected he was by the removal of layers that left the man in no way indecent. Damn, he really was hard up for something.

"Not exactly," Gal replied and left it at that. He really just wanted to get to bed, all the more for wanting to escape having company. He liked being alone, he didn't want to share his space, much less with someone who seemed to be compromising him with very little effort.

Gal climbed into the thick sleeping bag on his camp bed before leaning over and turning the little camping lantern down to a soft glow that was no more than moonlight.

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It was short hours later that Galahad woke.

It had taken him a while to drift off to sleep, unused to having company and finally lulled by Tristan's very soft snores.

It was the cold that had woken him.

Gal was already shaking when he came around enough to realise why. Even in the sleeping bag, the drop in temperature was more than obvious and at first he was sure it meant that the storm had well and truly hit and ripped the bar right out from over them. Which might have been the case, but it was also the case that the heater had gone out.

"Fuck," He wrapped the sleeping bag awkwardly around himself and stumbled the couple of steps to the heater. The pilot light was out and the gas had automatically shut off as a result, but there was plenty of it there. It had done this before on occasion, but with no draft as there had been outdoors, he hadn't considered it might happen.

He pressed the ignition a couple of times and the pilot worked just fine, so he turned the gas on and let it catch once more before moving the heater as close to the bed as possible without it being dangerous. If he could get the heat aimed to the bed it would circulate the warm air beneath him.

… And then Galahad remembered his guest, sleeping on the cold floor.

"Fuck," He muttered again, only this time a little quieter. It would be just his luck if the guy had died of hypothermia after he took him in from the storm.

"Tristan?" Gal spoke quietly but nudged the man with his foot.

There was a muffled response, before the man poked his head out from beneath the blankets.

"Are you okay? The heater went out."

Tristan nodded but even so his teeth chattered when he confirmed, "Cold."

"Fuck," Gal muttered under his breath once more, at a loss for anything else he could say. He thought a moment before letting out a exasperated huff. The room was freezing, even with the heater back on it would take some time to warm up again, especially now they were likely buried under a substantial amount of snow if the forecast was anything to go by.

Pushing aside further thought and hoping that neither of them ended up with frostbite or something crazy, Gal pulled at Tristan's blankets.

"Come on," he encouraged, though he knew - again - that his tone was put upon. He started to draw off the blankets and quilt, depositing them on the camp bed as Tristan threw him a questioning glance, rising all the same. "You'll freeze". Gal answered his unasked question and Tristan gave a curt nod before silently moving to the bed with the remaining blankets.

By the time Gal had moved the heater again, directing the heat into the space beneath them, Tristan was in the bed. His back was to Gal and the covers pulled back so that he could crawl into the renewed nest.

The bed was not built for two, but with them back to back it was sure to be okay, Gal mused as he climbed back in and resisted the temptation to rub his cold feet over Tristan's in order to heat them

up.

Maybe not as okay as he'd assumed.

Tristan's back pressed against his own was more human contact than Gal had had in a very long time and it took everything in him not to shudder as he settled against his warmth.

"Thank you," Tristan said quietly, Gal could still feel him shaking slightly as he warmed, and wondered if he'd have said nothing and continued to suffer in silence if Gal hadn't presented another option.

"Bit of a loner?" Gal found himself saying, more an observation than a question. He felt Tristan shift for a moment though they remained back to back.

"I'm not very good with... people. These days." There was some hesitation there that made Gal curious. He wasn't sure if being in bed with the man - albeit for completely innocent reasons - made it more or less appropriate to question further.

Even so, his mouth engaged before his brain and he replied jokingly, "These days? Was there a time when you were good with people?"

Gal winced and flushed at his own words, relieved at least to feel Tristan chuckle - the light vibration of it at his back, and travelling along the length of his spine.

"Probably not," Tristan replied and then cleared his throat, sounding more awake now. "I used to be a marine. I had friends then, well, family. More than colleagues. It's… they are the only ones who understand how it feels to do what we do, what we had to do. Other than them, no I've never been especially good with people. That was the common ground, I rarely find common ground with anyone now."

Gal felt an ache in his chest. Not only at the thought of how lonely Tristan seemed, but at the idea of him never being able to connect with anyone who couldn't understand the pain and responsibility of being a mechanism of war.

He found himself saying, as though to prove something somehow, "There are other things you could connect with someone over. Music? Books? Do you have hobbies?" Gal winced again, glad that Tristan couldn't see him as he seemed to be rather heavy handedly comparing being a marine to having a hobby.

At least Tristan seemed not to take offense when he replied, "Other than motorcycles… I like riding horses. I grew up around them, learned how to handle them, break them in when I was still just a child. But I haven't been around horses since I was discharged from-"

"Are you serious?" Gal resisted the urge to get up and look at the man, as though he might be pulling Gal's leg for some reason. "I… I grew up around horses too. My family owned a ranch, I used to love-"

Gal was cut unexpectedly short by the lump that rose suddenly and painfully in his throat. He hadn't thought about it for a long time, hadn't let himself. He had loved it. Loved that life, right up until the moment his parents had found out he was gay and thrown him out.

"Are you alright?" Tristan asked softly.

There was nothing Galahad could say other than the truth, or at least as much of it as he wanted to share. He didn't have it in him to share anything in that moment, his emotions pulled taut by the sudden memories.

"You switched to motorcycles," Gal said as lightly as he could manage, changing the subject.

Tristan was quiet for a moment and then must have decided to let Galahad drop the matter, "I like to travel, motorcycles are much more practical than horses over long distances." There was a jest in his tone and Gal found himself smiling, relaxing now that the fraut moment had passed.

"I own a horse," Tristan continued. "She's an old nag now, retired on my parent's property. I've had her since I was young, broke her in and trained her. I see her when I get back to see my family." He sounded wistful - distant - as though he was already halfway there in his mind.

"Do you see them often?" It took a moment to realise how personal the question might be, it had felt so natural to ask. Laying back to back in bed like this, soaking up each other's warmth. It felt intimate in a way he hadn't experienced in a long while, enough to loosen his inhibitions. Enough to make him feel both distant and close enough to this complete stranger to ask almost anything his curiosity posed.

Tristan didn't seem to have any problem with this, despite having mentioned his apparent lack of social skills, Gal could tell he was smiling a little as he replied.

"Enough. I… I've been on the road a long time. I can go back there when I need to rest, when I need a to be home they welcome me back but also give me my space." Tristan paused for a moment before asking, "I guess I'm a drifter. I pick up work here and there, sometimes I stop for a while in a place I like."

"Hhm," Gal hummed his understanding. He'd been one too in some ways, though he had always searched out a home, finally making one for himself here in this bar. "Don't you ever want to stop, y'know just be in one place? With your folks and your nag? Or somewhere of your own?"

"Sometimes," Tristan answered without hesitation. "If I could find the right place."

Galahad found himself nodding, "Not too close to other people, but not entirely isolated. Self sufficient where possible. Quiet when you want quiet, noisy when you need that, a routine to keep your mind active and-"

Gal stopped.

Tristan had shifted, turning in the tight space so that he could face Gal and prop himself on his elbow, studying him intently.

"Yes," Tristan's word came out breathless, "Something exactly like that."

Gal's pulse was suddenly hammering under the intense gaze and he couldn't help his own gaze dropping to the man's lips. It would be so easy to push up and kiss him, and damn, part of him really wanted to do that. How fucking long had it been since he'd shared a bed with another guy? Much less one he had anything remotely in common with other than a love of dick.

Galahad shook the thought off and looked away, he didn't need the kind of trouble invited by being stupid enough to kiss a complete stranger. One way or the other it would end badly. Perhaps

violently, if Tristan didn't take too kindly to a man kissing him.

He felt Tristan settle, but the man hadn't rolled back, and was instead still facing him.

Gal pointedly kept his gaze out into the dimly light room, not wanting to acknowledge how close they lay to each other.

Was he just imagining how charged the air felt? Like electricity snapping around them. He was even starting to get a little warm, too warm.

"Tell me about your horses Galahad," Tristan seemed impossibly close.

"They weren't mine," Gal spoke through grit teeth, not able to hold back. "They were my dad's. He ran a stud farm, I used to help in the stables until…" He trailed off, the memory was bittersweet and agonising, it ripped him apart every time. And it had been so long since he last thought about it.

"You don't have to-" Tristan started, a softness in his voice that hurt. Gal felt him backing away, maybe he was going to roll his back to him again?

Gal reached out and stopped him, his hand on Tristan's arm, not physically stopping him but just suggesting he stay. Tristan took the suggestion and they looked at each other in the warm glow of the camplight. Galahad hadn't meant to do that.

"I loved riding, I miss it," Gal couldn't help a chuckle. He suddenly was transported back to his seventeen year old self, riding horses, mucking out the stables, good grades in school, set to take over the family business that he already loved. Life had been good. It had been great.

So great.

His mind flashed to Randall, the stable boy that helped out from the town. He was the same age as Gal but went to a different school. They'd hit it off over their passion for horses and general youthful exuberance. They'd lost their virginities to each other one hot summer night in the barn rafters on a bale of fresh straw they were meant to be laying as horse bedding.

Gal continued without Tristan having to ask why he was no longer there, why he didn't visit like Tristan did his family because that seemed clear without it having to be said.

"They kicked me out. My dad caught me kissing another boy in the stable," sweet, oh so sweet until that bitter turn - the beating that followed. Randall left with a threat to never return, Gal never saw him again. "My dad, he… As soon as I was healed enough from the beating, before they wore me down completely with the sanctimonious bullshit of the sin of homosexuality, I left. I packed a bag and I…" He searched for the right word and then found it with a mirthless chuckle, "drifted."

He felt as well as heard Tristan draw in a long breath, as though steadying himself. Maybe he was angry for Galahad? Maybe he was fragile enough to be angry at Galahad for being gay and tricking him into this bed, if he saw it that way.

Gal closed his eyes and waited. For something. To be struck perhaps. Wouldn't be like his dad was the last guy to have beat him up.

He wasn't expecting the soft touch, the gentle fingers stroking down the side of his face, over the soft fur of his beard.

He kept his eyes closed, unsure how to react.

"You made your home here, quiet and loud and everything you need," Tristan's voice was full of admiration or adoration, maybe both. It hurt either way and Gal wanted to laugh it off, but the lump in his throat was too big to allow it.

"I worked hard for this. I had nothing, I didn't finish high school, lived rough. I was… I got beat up a lot. I managed to find work here and there, anything really. Then I was washing up in a bar, and then I was serving behind the bar. I was managing the place by the time the owner retired and I'd saved enough for the down payment on this place." Gal had no idea why he was spilling his guts to a complete stranger, even if that man was in his bed.

Damn, he really was starting to feel quite overheated.

"You're remarkable," Tristan sounded so close he didn't dare open his eyes. Just taking a moment to take in the sincerity. He was glad when Tristan continued, no expectation for him to say anymore for a moment. "My family have been very accepting, but I couldn't let my sexuality get in the way of the career I wanted. I gave years of my life, my blood and tears to the marines, but I could never truly be myself. It was easier to be alone, no-"

"Expectations," Gal found himself finishing. He opened his eyes and Tristan was almost over him, looking down at him intently, studying his face.

Tristan suddenly grinned at him, "I think I like you better like this than when you're being a grumpy asshole."

Gal ignored the hand that brushed lightly, gently and affectionately, through his curls.

"You're such a dick," Gal rolled his eyes, exasperated. If he hadn't rolled his eyes, he'd have seen Tristan move and realised what was happening before the man's mouth was on his.

*

Gal's whimper was loud and long and he couldn't have stopped it if he wanted to. And part of him did want to.

Who the fuck was this guy to turn up unannounced asking for shettler like something from the nativity? And then crawl into his bed like… well that had been at his invitation. One that he should now regret, but his thoughts were becoming muddled as his blood rushed quickly from his brain down to his dick. He was hard within moments and Tristan could clearly feel it even through the muddle of blankets. Not surprising given that he was painfully hard, rock hard. So hard he was surprised he hadn't burst a blood vessel or passed out. And he wanted to be angry at this man for it but he was too busy kissing him back.

It was Tristan who finally showed a little restraint and pulled back, breathing heavily and looking pained, or at least pained for someone who mostly looked stoic. He seemed conflicted, which Gal obviously understood, even if he was almost successfully ignoring his own conflict.

“I’m sorry, this was… I don’t usually…” Tristan’s voice was husky, and for a moment the raw bravado that exuded from him slipped. Gal wondered how rarely he must be clearly vulnerable like this? Someone more used to hissing his displeasure through his teeth than admitting to any weakness.

“Sleep with men?” Gal found himself asking in a worried tone. He had understood Tristan to be gay from what he’d said, but he actually hadn’t ever said it had he? But maybe he had meant something else and now Gal could be under some guy having some sort of gay panic that might turn violent at a moment’s notice. He studied Tristan’s face, sure that wasn’t going to happen but unable to relax enough to let the fear go completely.

“No… Yes,” Tristan’s words were an annoyed rumble, “I don’t usually hook up with random people like this.”

“Are we hooking up?” Gal’s concern broke and he couldn’t help his grin, he was relieved when Tristan returned it. “How do you get laid if you don’t… do this?” Gal asked, meaning meeting guys at bars, if this could be described as such.

“I don’t,” Tristan admitted, “I like to keep to myself and-”

“Not have sex,” Gal finished, a little horrified to meet someone that apparently got laid even less than him.

“Not often,” Tristan confirmed.

And that was all Gal needed to hear to decide that he had to help right that wrong. There was no way that such a man should be going wanting on cold nights. He certainly felt even more sorry for Tristan than he ever had for himself.

Gal snaked his arms around Tristan’s neck and pulled him down into a deep kiss. Tristan didn’t hesitate or pull away so Gal was happy that he wanted this to be one of those *not often* times. Even so he needed to make sure, but didn’t want to spook Tristan by asking out right. Gal knew himself well enough to know he’d easily say it in the wrong tone and it would be taken as a call out or some shit.

So he asked, “Do you have a preference? Position wise?”

He went about nuzzling at Tristan’s throat, where beard became skin, whilst he waited for the words to be processed and an answer given.

The sound that issued from Tristan was something between a growl and a whimper before he replied breathlessly, “I’m pretty versatile, you?”

“Oh I’m a bottom all the way,” Gal replied with a chuckle, delighted to find this evening was going to get better and better. He felt Tristan shudder against him and it was with a grin and a husky, playful voice that he continued, “Fuck me?”

Tristan moaned and kissed him again, rocking up against him as he did so that their bodies were now completely aligned, and Tristan’s rock hard cock was pressed to his thigh. One little wriggle and their lengths would be pressed together and Gal would likely fucking come before either of them had a chance to think, let alone act.

Tristan finally pulled back, Gal now sure that even his beard now had beard burn, growling in his ear, “Condoms?”

Gal groaned and let his head sink back on the pillow.

“Fuck, I… Well, I didn’t exactly think I was going to get lucky during this damn storm,” Gal couldn’t help the anger in his voice, frustration and-

Tristan was moving anyway, kneeling up between Gal’s legs as the bed barely held up to the movement. Even so he steadied himself and pulled his own top off before unbuttoning his jeans.

“There are other ways,” Tristan growled, shimmying his jeans down to his knees before moving to pull Gal’s sweatpants down. But then he hesitated, his eyes intense as he looked at Gal and asked throatily, “Can I make you come?”

Gal didn’t even realise he’d started nodding until he went to nod and realised he already was, emphatically. He started to pull off his own top whilst Tristan pulled down his pants and underwear, moving until he was off the end of the bed, shifting the covers as he went. Stood at the foot of the bed, Tristan stepped out of his jeans and looked back down at Gal - both of them naked as the day they were born.

And fuck, he was gorgeous. Gal’s felt his cock twitch and a drop of precome well up at his tip.

“Damn,” Gal whined, taking his cock in hand and applying a little pressure. He was on the verge of stroking it until Tristan grabbed the covers and began to crawl back over him, bringing them with him.

“Wait,” Tristan pretty much commanded, so Gal did, stilling his hand as Tristan kissed him again, settling them both back under the warmth of the covers. His hand went to Gal’s and moved it away from his cock. “Wait,” He repeated, once more a man of few words, as he then disappeared under the covers.

Gal clenched his jaw as Tristan settled between his legs, spreading his thighs apart. Gal was expecting a blow job, he was not expecting strong arms to reposition his ass, pulling him up a little, before a hot, wet tongue met his asshole.

“Fuck!” Gal cried out, jolting so much that he nearly knocked them both off of the already struggling bed. Tristan righted them immediately and set about lathing his tongue over Gal’s pucker, wet and sloppy. It was amazing.

When Tristan pressed his tongue into him, Gal was sure there was a high chance of him coming just like this.

“Fuck, dammit, yes… just like that…” Gal moaned and tried to stop the full body spasm that threatened.

He whimpered then as Tristan pulled back from his ass but otherwise remained. It took a moment for Gal to realise he was moving his hand. And then there was a wet sound and Tristan’s mouth was back on him… and a saliva slicked finger was pushing in alongside his tongue.

“Right there, oh fuck!” Galahad practically screamed as Tristan moved his finger, crooked it, sending shockwaves through his prostate. Any more of that and he really would be coming, but it

seemed only to demonstrate Tristan's prowess rather than intent as he began to fuck the finger in and out as he rimmed him. Making a pass at his prostate each time but no direct action, the wonderful bastard.

Galahad wasn't sure if this went on for minutes or hours, he was a mess. Panting and making noises that in any other situation would embarrass the fuck out of him. Even in this situation really, if he had any cognitive powers remaining. But it was hard to be embarrassed when someone was taking you apart by finger fucking you whilst eating your ass like it was their last meal.

"I'm gonna…" Gal warned as he felt his balls start to tighten, felt a pressure build within. But then Tristan drew back from him and started back up the bed. He lay next to Gal and wiped the back of his hand over his mouth and beard to clear away the moisture before he sucked another finger into his mouth, his eyes on Gal's as he did so.

And Gal knew he was staring, wide eyed and completely crazed looking as this lewd action happened before him. Tristan was fucking intense, his eyes dark and sensual as he moved closer, slipping those fingers down until he pressed them both slowly into Gal.

At that Gal broke eye contact, hissing at the discomfort as his head fell back against the pillows.

"Is this okay?" Tristan asked, not pushing any further but wriggling his fingers a little to keep the sensation there without penetrating deeper.

Gal nodded and bit his lower lip, bearing down as Tristan pushed his fingers in to the root. He stopped then and moved them a little, feeling the very centre of Galahad. "It's just… it's been a while. Only two okay?" Gal requested.

It was only when he felt Tristan nod against him that he realised he'd closed his eyes tight shut. He had no fucking control over any part of his body right now.

All the more evident when a sort of moan-growl gurgled from his throat as Tristan began to slowly thrust in and out with his fingers.

"Oh god…" It was so fucking good. He hadn't been fucked in so long. Only a toy now and then, his own fingers occasionally. But nothing compared to the depth, the angle, the intuition and sensation of another human being.

Tristan practically fused himself to Gal as he worked his fingers, a promise for the future or more likely an echo of what might have been. Why the fuck hadn't he brought condoms and lube? Why would he have? But why didn't he?!

Tristan pushed his crotch forward until it was pressed against Gal's, "Now you can," Tristan rumbled with no further explanation. Gal shook the reverie and nodded dumbly, taking hold of Tristan's cock to bring it fully against his own before starting to stroke them together. After a minute he was doing so in time with the gentle rhythm of Tristan's thrusts.

If he couldn't get a bit of cock, this surely had to be the next best thing.

Tristan's mouth was on his again, kissing him hungrily as he thrust his fingers deep a few times and then shallow. He moaned into Galahad's mouth when he mirrored as best he could with his fist.

Before long they had set a rhythm and sweat began to bead all over their bodies. Galahad couldn't help but think that it was a great way to keep warm until the heater had them back up to -

"Fuck!" Gal cried out as Tristan glanced against his prostate.

"I'm close," Tristan growled and Gal nodded, doubling his efforts as he pumped them together. Tristan began to thrust erratically into Gal's hand, whilst his own all the more tormented Gal's prostate.

The writhed together, moaning and fucking until Gal cried out.

His orgasm hit him out of nowhere and practically blinded him. His come splattered over his fist and his stomach, over the parts of Tristan that it could reach. The feeling of his ass clenching down on Tristan within him had him groaning and pulsing all the more as he spilled every last drop he had.

Tristan grunted, clearly so close. Even as he continued to thrust through Gal's climax, Gal released their cocks and took hold of only Tristan's. He smeared the copious precome with his thumb, eased the foreskin back and forth a little before taking him in hand.

He tried to think of any handjob tricks he knew that might impress as much as Tristan's rimming had, but they turned out to be unnecessary as Tristan grunted again, a little louder, and came between them, hot ropes of come hitting Gal's already cooling mess.

After a few moments they stilled, breathing heavily against each other, foreheads pressed together.

"That was the best fuck I've ever had that didn't involve a cock in my ass," Gal chuckled. Tristan hummed his amused approval and pressed his nose to Gal's throat, nestling against him.

"So good. Tired now," He mumbled.

"Yeah," Gal agreed, thinking they should at least get themselves over to the sink in the corner of the room and clean off all the come. Maybe even remove the sheets? It was the last thought he had before falling to sleep in Tristan's arms.

*

Gal woke in the darkened room to his alarm going off. He reached out and turned it off before turning the camplight the whole way up. The room looked so different in the brighter light, now able to see the entire cellar beyond the intimate little camp he'd created.

They'd created.

Gal sank back in the bed, confirming what he already knew - the lack of body heat. The lack of Tristan.

The storm had lasted through the next day and they had spent those hours wrapped in each other. Talking and laughing, annoying each other and being prickly, fucking. So much fucking. He could still feel Tristan's fingers inside him and wished he'd had the chance to feel more.

But he could hear the wind was gone now, the storm had finally passed sometime in the night and nothing was keeping Tristan there.

A holiday romance, nothing more - Gal tried to tell himself. Ignoring the fact that he had never been so open with someone before in his life. Never before felt he could be.

It didn't matter. He would just continue. As he always did. Nothing had changed.

Gal pulled himself from the bed and rummaged for a single scrap of clothing before giving up and wrapping a blanket around him. He needed to flip the fuses, get the power back on and have a shower if the place was still standing, have a coffee and then survey the damage to the building.

He was glad at least to find the roof had held and his apartment, whilst some snow had made it in through a window that had given up in the face of the strong winds, was relatively unscathed. And the shower was bliss.

Gal took his time to dress in thermals and several layers, feeling colder than he had in a long while. Something he was resolute he would not think on too deeply. He pulled on his heavy duty boots and a grabbed his snow jacket.

He had coffee in his gloved hands by the time he stepped outside.

There had been a drift against the door but it had been pushed back when Tristan had left. Everything else was blanketed in thick snow and he had to go halfway across the carpark to look back and really see how bad it was.

The damage wasn't terrible, nothing structural as far as he could tell. Much less than anticipated, and a lot of it could wait until the snow thawed and he could get to it properly. Maybe hire some handyman from the town.

Gal was about to go back inside and start to get everything in order so he could reopen sooner rather than later, when he heard the roar of bikes.

When he turned he could see a small group of bikers coming up the road and recognised them instantly as the Sarmatians. He let out a huff of amusement, lifting his hands in greetings as they started to pull in and turn off their engines.

"This watering hole is going to be dry at least another day boys," He called out to Bors, the closest to him, as he removed his helmet.

"Don't be a fool Galahad," Bors grinned at him and swung his leg so that he was standing and walking over from his bike. He slapped a large hand down on Gal's shoulder, knocking the wind out of him. "You're our brother, remember. We've come to see if you need a hand."

Gal was silent but gave a nod of appreciation, not trusting himself to speak, so touched by the offer as he was.

Bors walked passed him towards the bar as the others dismounted and removed their helmets, each calling a greeting or giving him a friendly slap on the arm as they followed Bors. Gawain stopped and smiled warmly, "He'll be wanting a night of free drinking out of this." He warned.

Galahad laughed, easing something in his chest. "I expected nothing less," He smiled back.

Gawain slapped Gal's back, but then Gal was distracted by the final figure removing his helmet - he already recognised the beard but…

Gawain caught his eye and looked back. “Oh, hope you don’t mind, this is Tristan, a friend Bors from the marines. He was on his way to visit when he got caught in the storm, but he made it through, Bors had been worried.”

Gawain beckoned Tristan over with a wave of his hand.

“This is Galahad, who we told you about. Best bar for miles,” Gawain winked at Gal and he couldn’t help but laugh. “Tristan has plenty of experience working in construction and maintenance, stuff like that. He’s going to earn most of the drinks.”

Gawain chuckled to himself and followed after the others, leaving Tristan and Gal to make their introductions.

“Hi,” Gal was unsure what else to say.

“Good morning,” Tristan smiled at him, bright.

“Would have been a better morning if you’d stayed,” Gal replied honestly. He wanted to smack himself in the head for letting the words fall from his mouth.

Tristan’s face fell a little, “You don’t have to believe me, but I was planning to come back even before I knew they were bringing me here. I couldn’t get in touch with Bors, the phone lines were down and I knew he’d be worried that I didn’t make it to him before the storm hit.”

“You could have, you know. You could have made it to his instead of stopping here,” Gal realised. “He lives only ten minutes ride from here, you could have made it before the storm. Why the hell did you stop?” Not that he was going to complain about that.

Tristan huffed a laugh and pointed up at the roadside sign for the bar that was now hanging crooked but had otherwise survived. It was shaped like a horse and had the bar’s name emblazoned across it - *The Homestead*

Gal felt the colour rise in his cheeks, remembering everything they’d shared and unable to suppress the immediate fantasy of them out riding together on a fresh spring day.

“I hear you’re handy fixing things,” Gal grinned.

“I’m handy with a lot of things,” Tristan’s voice was a low rumble as he stepped into Gal’s personal space, their bodies almost pressing together.

“I recall,” Gal all but winked, tugging at Tristan’s leathers until they were practically sharing the same space. “Are you drifting? It’s okay if you are, I just… want to know where I stand”.

Tristan studied him for awhile before replying softly, “Homestead, sounds something like an offer, or a command. Either way, sounds somewhere good to be for now.”

It was as committal as Tristan was going to get, Gal knew, and he was happy to take it. Take Tristan as long as he wanted to settle.

Gal tugged him again until their lips pressed together in a slow, exploratory kiss. The kind of hello kiss he could happily wake to every day. The kind that had him completely ignoring the sound of the bar door banging open and footfalls on the decking as an audience gathered.

“Not gonna lie, I thought they’d hit it off, but that was fucking quick,” They heard Bors marvel.

Tristan laughed into Gal’s mouth and Gal pulled him closer still.

End Notes

Chapter 2 posting tomorrow - 23rd Dec

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